

A PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

NO. 2426

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 18, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 14, 1887

“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”
Psalms 85:6

BRETHREN, if you will pray this prayer, it will be better than my preaching from it. And my only motive in preaching from it is that you may pray it. Oh, that at once, before I have uttered more than a few sentences, we might begin to pray by crying, yea, groaning deep down in our souls, “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

Notice the style of the praying here, it is in the form of a question and in the shape of a plea. There are very few words and none that can be spared. Godly men, when they prayed of old, meant it. They did not pray for form's sake, neither were they very particular about uttering goodly words and fine-sounding sentences, but they came to close grips with God. They put interrogatories to Him, they pleaded with Him, they drove home the nail, and tried to clinch it. I see that in the very shape of the prayer, “Wilt thou not—wilt thou not—wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

Oh, that we knew how to pray! I fear that we do not. We are missing the sacred art, we are losing the heavenly mystery, we are but apprentice hands in prayer. Compared with such a man as John Knox, whose prayers were worth more than an army of ten thousand men, or compared with the prayers of Luther, how few of us can pray!

Luther was a man of whom they said, as they pointed at him in the street, “There goes a man who can have anything he likes to ask of God.” He was the man who, by his prayer, dragged Melancthon back from the very gates of death, and what was more, the man who could shake upon her seven hills the harlot of Rome as she never had been shaken before, because he was mighty with God in prayer.

Oh, that I could but stir up my brethren and sisters to be instant in season and out of season, if there be such a thing as out of season with God in prayer! Let us get away to our closets. Let us cry mightily to Him. Let us come to close quarters with Him and say, “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

I. To come at once to the text, let us ask, WHAT IS THE TIME FOR SUCH A PRAYER AS THIS?

We shall have to look at the Psalm itself to help us in the answer. What is the time for offering such a prayer as this? It is, dear friends, *when we can remember some gracious acts of God in the past*. Read, “LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob...Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

Ah, now! some of you can recollect grand times, when you were younger than you now are, when the Lord was present with His people in a very glorious fashion, when He laid bare His arm, and the people were made to feel His divine presence in the preaching of the Word. Do you not remember it? The forty-fourth Psalm begins, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.”

None of us can remember the early Methodist days, they were over before we were born, but they were very wonderful times when the preaching of the Word was like fire in the midst of the people.

[Our friends need not be troubled by the flying of a dove. It will soon go out of the window, no doubt. Let us believe that it has come as a messenger of good. Oh, that the blessed Dove would His own self come from heaven and bring salvation in His wings!]

Well, I was saying that those first Methodist times were brave days, so our fathers have told us, though we cannot remember them. But some of you can recollect when you were members of a happy congregation, all united, all earnest, all pleading with God, and there were grand Sabbath days then. You can never forget those days of the Son of man upon the earth, when conversions were numerous, and all the people of God rejoiced and were ready to shout for joy.

If you have any recollection of such days as those, pray this prayer, “Lord, what You have done, thou can do; will You not revive us again? You can outdo all we have yet seen of Your work. Come, now, we beseech You now, and repeat Your mercies in the eyes of Your people.”

After some mercy drops, then, it becomes us to cry for showers of blessing. Pray again the petition that we sang just now—

*“Revive Thy work, O Lord,
And give refreshing showers,
The glory shall be all Thine own,
The blessing, Lord, be ours.”*

Another time for such a prayer is, *after tokens of divine displeasure*, when we are somewhat under a cloud. Thus the psalmist says, “Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

I feel that the church of God generally is at this time in a very sad case, and though I am told that I am a croaker, and too nervous, and so on, yet I know what I know, and I speak not without clear information nor without a heart that is heavy at knowing so much of the evil of the times. And because the times are dark, and God’s Gospel is at a discount, and prayerfulness of spirit and holiness of life are things not so common among us as they should be, therefore I think that it is time to cry to the Lord, “Wilt thou not revive us again?”

I do entreat God’s people to pray now, if they have ever prayed in their lives. This is a dark hour of the night, now cry mightily unto the Lord, the God of our salvation, that He will turn our captivity and send the daystar which shall herald that day that shall never know a night. It is good to pray when you have seen good days and it is equally right to pray when you think that the days are not what they should be.

Another time for praying like this is *when saints feel languid*. Do you always feel alike active? Do you always feel alike energetic? I think not. If you were to look at one of the statues, say, in Westminster Abbey, you would find that it never complains of rheumatism and is not affected either by heat or cold, because it is not alive. But living men and living women have their changes because they have life. The most flourishing tree that grows sheds its leaves when the time comes. All plants are not always in flower—they have their springs, their summers, their autumns, and their winters, and it is just so with God’s people.

Whenever you, therefore, feel dull and languid, here is a prayer for you, “Wilt thou not revive us again? Lord, come and wake us up again. Pour fresh strength into Your weak children. Put the living fire into Your lukewarm children. Raise Your sleepy children, Lord, make us all now to live at the highest point of life if for a while we have seemed ready to die.”

Perhaps someone will say, “Then it is the prayer for me, for I feel languid and weak.” If so, be sure that you use it. Do not see the suitability of it and then put it up on the shelf, but pray to the Lord at once, “Wilt thou not revive us again?”

Another time when this prayer is very suitable is *when efforts seem to be useless*—when, for instance, I have preached the Gospel and have had no conversions. When you have been in your Sunday

school class and no child has cried to God for mercy. When you have been up and down your tract district and not one person has said a cheering word as to taking interest in the sermon that you have left.

When indeed you have come to close quarters with some hearts and have really laid yourselves out for the conversion of such and such persons, and you appear to have failed. Well now, if that has been your experience, do not go home miserable, but go to God with this prayer, “Lord, wilt thou not revive us again?”

How quickly the Lord can revive us! Here, by the space of thirty-three years or so, I have been favored by the grace of God to preach to an attentive congregation, but there have been times when I have felt that there was—

*“No stir in the air,
No stir in the sea,”*

when I have preached, but it seemed to be like talking to a dead wall. And yet, or ever I have been aware of it, God’s Spirit has come down upon the people, and the same blessed Gospel—for we have not two gospels—has been blessed to many, and one after another, they have cried out, “What must we do to be saved?”

Workers for Christ, never think of giving up your work, but stick to it and pray this prayer vehemently, and intensely, “Wilt thou not revive us again? Lord, send us once again times of increased spiritual life, times of greater success in the winning of souls!”

And once more, I think that this prayer may well be prayed *when we have among us a number of persons who are backsliding*. In a large church, there are always some who are spiritually sickly, going back and declining, and some of us know the heartbreak of mourning over those that did run well, of whom we have sorrowfully to ask, “What did hinder them?”

There are some who used to be bold in the service of God, who now forsake His house, and His way, and even deny His holy name. Well, what then?

*“When any turn from Zion’s way,
Alas, what numbers do!”*

let this prayer be in our heart and on our tongue, “Wilt thou not revive us again? Great Shepherd, come and bring back the stray sheep. Holy Spirit, come, we beseech You, with Your quickening breath, and bring back to life and spiritual health those that are fainting and ready to die.”

Thus, I think I have shown you that there are many occasions upon which this prayer would be a very fit one. Let us now silently, all of us who know how to pray, breathe this petition into God’s ear, “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

II. Secondly, though it will be the same thought presented a little differently, let us consider THE NEED OF SUCH A PRAYER, “Wilt thou not revive us again?”

Who needs such a prayer? Who needs it? Well, first of all, *the minister needs it*. Brethren, you make a mistake about some of us ministers, you have a notion that we are always full of grace, that when we come into the pulpit we are always able to command earnestness and zeal. Do not believe it. We are but poor creatures without our God. Apart from divine grace, we are just as hard-hearted towards sinners as any of our people are, and we have to cry mightily to God to keep our spiritual nature alive, even as you do.

Pray more for us. Do I entreat you. Pray that God would revive us again. If the preachers grow dull and sleepy, there is no wonder that the people do so. Therefore, give us a special place in your supplications that we may be kept right for your sakes, and for Christ’s sake, and the Gospel’s sake. Oh, pray for ministers! I am not going to find fault with any of them any more than I find fault with myself, but there is grievous need to pray for many occupants of pulpits, that the Lord would revive them again.

There is a very common habit of criticizing us and I am sure I do not mind if you criticize me as much as ever you like, but it is very difficult for me to find anybody to take this pulpit, because anybody that some of you like, others do not like. I have given up any idea of pleasing you all, but I just try to do my best, that is all I can do. But the habit of criticizing ministers is a bad one. Give it up and begin to pray for them. Pray more and more for all preachers of the Word, "Lord, revive them. Lord, revive them."

I have heard of a minister who preached once about our being epistles, written not with ink, but with the Holy Spirit. One of his divisions was that sometimes ministers were pens and they could not write upon men's hearts because they were not dipped in the ink. I think that there is a great deal in that thought. If a minister comes forward with a good dip of ink in his pen, then he can write upon men's hearts. When the Spirit of God fills us and we are revived, then some good writing will be done, but not else.

But dear friends, *all the leaders of our church want receiving*. Of our church, I mean. If there are any people who need praying for, it is deacons, and I put the elders with them. Never forget to pray for them. I have no fault to find with them any more than I have to find with the ministers, but they are no better than they should be, and they will not be as good as they should be unless the grace of God shall come upon them and bless them. Oh, to have around us a loving band of church officers! It is our great joy and delight to have such men around us, but may the Lord make better men of them, equip them all for their spiritual work to the very highest degree, and fill them all with divine life!

I was preaching once in a place which happened to be full when I preached there, but the congregation was very small at other times. And when I went into the vestry, I noticed two gentlemen leaning against the mantelpiece in a very comfortable manner, and I asked them if they were the deacons of the church. They said that they were, and I then told them that I had looked for some time to find out the reason why that church did not prosper, and I had found it out. They were anxious to know what it was, but I did not further inform them. I have no doubt that, often, dead deacons and dead elders prevent a church prospering. Therefore, let us pray earnestly for the leaders of God's Israel, "Lord, revive them again. Put more spiritual life into them."

The same is true of *all the members of the church without exception*. How much they need reviving! And *all the workers, too*. You who have a large class to look after, you who are conducting a Mission, why, if you who lead the way in Christ's work go to sleep, what is to become of the work? So, let us carry upon our hearts in prayer all our fellow-members, the workers and the sufferers, and cry to God, "Lord, revive them. Keep them in a good state. Keep them in proper trim that they may do that work in noble fashion, and bring glory to Your holy name. Will you not revive us again?" Brothers, sisters, let me breathe this prayer in the name of you all, "Lord, we want to serve You at our very best. Revive us again, we beseech You."

But further, we must pray thus, for there is great need on the part of *the hesitators*. Some of you who are here tonight seemed about to be converted years ago. I know a man whom, to this day, you cannot get into a place of worship. He says he will never go any more. He declares that he was within an inch of being converted when he went last time and he is afraid to go again.

But there are some of you who always come and you have almost learned to sit contentedly upon the brink of decision. Oh, pray for them, dear friends. Pray for the hesitators, pray for the procrastinators, pray for those who are trifling away their conscience, gradually getting rid of everything like spiritual fear and distress, and who will shut their eyes and sleep themselves into perdition unless God in great mercy prevent it! O Lord, will You not revive us again, that these sleepers may wake up and become decided for You?

Besides, we have need to pray this prayer when we think of *the careless ones* among us. What strange people come into such a congregation as this! A man came here this morning for no earthly purpose but to pick pockets, and I dare say he is here again tonight. Look sharp after him. I wish I knew how to pick my way into his heart and to run away with him as a captive for my Lord. Oh, that even he

might be transformed by divine grace! The most curious motives bring people under the sound of the Gospel, some of them positively wicked, others of them quite ridiculous.

Then look at *the outside public*, the myriads who never go to hear the Gospel at all. How are they to be reached by a cold, dead church? So, for their sakes, for the sake of this great London, for the sake of this great nation, for the sake of the world, let us pray, “O God, be pleased to revive us again!”

I pause here and beseech you not to let me pass the next milestone until each one of you have prayed this prayer, “Wilt thou not revive us again?”

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly, THE ESSENCE OF SUCH A PRAYER, “Wilt thou not revive us again?” What is this prayer if it is analyzed and we get to the very soul of it?

Well, it means, first, *dependence upon God*. If you are praying this prayer aright, you feel, “Lord, nobody can revive us but Yourself.” People often talk about “getting up a revival.” Is not that a wicked thing? “Wilt thou not revive us, O Lord?” The machinery for getting up a revival may often be the greatest hindrance to true godliness.

A church cannot be revived unless God revives it. Not a soul is saved, not a saint is quickened and made to grow except by the work of God. That is what this prayer means, “Lord, put Your hand to the work. Put Your right hand to it, we beseech You. We depend alone upon You. Will You not revive us again?”

The essence of this prayer is, next, *confidence in God*. “Lord, You can revive us again. We are not so deep in the mire but that You canst lift us out. We are not so dead but that You canst make us alive. Will you not revive us again? It is impossible to us, but it is possible to You. Lord, one touch of Your hand, a breath from Your blessed lips, and it is done. Will you not revive us again?”

Brothers, sisters, we believe in God, do we not? And if we do, we believe that whatever state a church is in, God can bring it out of it. Do not run away from it and say, “God can never bless it.” He can bless it. Pray it up into a blessing and make this the essence of your prayer, “Lord, You can revive us. We believe it, and we look for it.”

The essence of this prayer is, next, *importunity with God*. “Wilt thou not revive us again?” It is earnest pleading, it is pushing the point home, it is urging it with God. Do this, I pray you, dear brothers and sisters, with regard to the state of the church at the present time. If half a dozen of you would, tonight, or as soon as possible, shut yourselves up a while and begin to cry to God for a revival of religion, and if you continued to cry more and more until it came, there would be grand hopes for the end of this century.

If we could get a band of men and women who would give God no rest until He made His Jerusalem a praise in the earth, we should see, between now and the twentieth century, something that would make our very eyes sparkle, and our hearts dance for joy. It needs but that we wrestle with the Angel of the covenant and we may have what we will.

We may be in a bad case, but we are not worse off than the churches were a hundred years ago, yet God heard the prayers of mourners in Zion who in secret places cried to Him and He will hear our prayers, too. Wherefore, let us make a solemn league and covenant together, and let us in union and concert of prayer wait upon the Lord, and hear what He shall speak, for He will yet speak peace unto His people if we do but know how to ask for it. I leave with you who are the King’s remembrancers this sweet prayer to be prayed night and day, “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

IV. Now I finish with this last head THE NET RESULT IF THIS PRAYER IS ANSWERED. “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

It seems rather singular—does it not? that the psalmist should put as the reason for a revival that God’s people should rejoice in Him? You and I do not always estimate things aright. Preaching is only the stalk—conversion, prayer, praise—these are the full corn in the golden ear. In the garden, the leaves may represent the work that is done, but the flowers are the praise that is rendered.

In a revival, part of the result is the conversion of men, but *the* result is the praise of God and that revival brings forth most fruit that gives to God the most glory. God is most glorified when His people rejoice in Him, hence, the ripest fruit, the innermost core and center of that which comes of all holy service, is the joy in God which is as worship to Him.

I reckon that we have served God when we have fed the poor, when we have taught the ignorant, when we have reclaimed the wanderer, but I am equally sure that we have rendered acceptable sacrifice when we have prayed to God, when we have delighted ourselves in Him, when the joy of our heart has in silence exhaled towards Him.

So, therefore, if God will be pleased to send a revival, *His people will rejoice in Him because they are revived*. They will be thankful that their spirits are plucked away from their languor and lethargy, and then they will begin to rejoice with the joy of gratitude, because God has done such great things for them. And then sinners will be converted and straightway *saints will rejoice over sinners saved*. They will say,

***“Ring the bells of heaven! There is joy today,
For a soul returning from the wild;”***

and they will give God the glory of that soul’s salvation. So, in that way, His people will rejoice in Him.

But best of all, to come back to where I started, when everything is right in the church, and there is a happy and prosperous time, then God’s people will silently and inwardly render unto Him a revenue of praise by *rejoicing in Him*. It must be a good thing—must it not?—for you in the midst of the turmoil of business, or for me in the midst of controversy, just to forget it all, to shake it all off and say, “Oh, what a God I have! Blessed be His name!” I often revel in God my exceeding joy, I seem to just give myself up to the enjoyment of a holy festival of delight in God, feasting my heart to the full. And what are the dainties that are spread before us at such a feast?

Well, first, I rejoice that there is a God. What a horrible world this would be to live in without God—the house all furnished and nobody at home! But my Lord is always at home and God is better than His world, beautiful as are the avenues of trees and yonder glistening river. God is always at home, that is the joy of our life. I love to see my Father’s flag on the top of the castle and to feel that He is at home. His presence makes everything so bright.

And then what a joy it is to think that He is my God! Whatever I have, or have not, it does not matter. I have a God, and all that there is in God is mine. O my soul, what a happy, happy being you are! Blessed be God forever for making me, seeing that He has made Himself to be mine! We praise Him first for our being, and then for our well-being, and the essence of our well-being is that God, the greatest of all beings, is ours forever and ever.

This God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death, and each one of us who is truly His can sing,

“Yea, my own God is He.”

As I think of God, I meditate on all His attributes. He is a powerful God. Oh, how I love Him for that! I do not want to have a weak arm to lean upon—let my Lord be the mighty God. Hallelujah to Him because He can do all things and all that power will be used for righteousness and truth. I love to think of Him as the God of love, nothing even in His justice being contrary to love. Oh, what a blessed God I have—a God of love!

Then I think of Him as a God of justice, and I am equally pleased with Him. I do not want an unjust God, a God who could pardon sin without atonement is no God for me. I delight to feel that His justice is as much concerned and bound to save me as His mercy. Oh, what a joy to be able to rejoice in His justice!

And then to rejoice in His truth, His faithfulness, that He cannot lie—His immutability, that He cannot change—His eternal existence, that He cannot faint or die—ah, my brethren, I shall not attempt to go over all the qualities of the Infinite JEHOVAH, but whatever they are, we delight in them all, and yet we rejoice in Him most of all.

There are many causes for joy to a Christian, but the great wellhead is God Himself. I can rejoice in His people, but then they have their faults. I can rejoice in His Word, but then I sometimes tremble at that Word. I can rejoice in God's works, but then there is a certain terror even about them. But as for God, He Himself is perfect. And whether He is dressed in robes of war, or comes to me with words of peace, now that I am reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, He is altogether delightful under any aspect and in any place.

It may seem a very little thing for us thus to delight in God, but it is the greatest thing of all. It is the crown of a revival that God's people should rejoice in Him.

Now, dear hearts, as you come to the communion table, I want you to try to rejoice in God. "But I am mourning about myself," says one. Well, mourn about yourself if you like, but do rejoice in God. "Oh, but I am troubled in my circumstances!" Well, but a child of God should rise above circumstances and rejoice in God. There is more in God to cheer you than in your circumstances to depress you.

Say to all these things, "Good-bye! Good-bye! Go home, for tonight I am just going to rejoice in God to the full." God help you so to do and if you do, I shall know that the revival has come, and we shall look to see other fruits of it, seeing that this best and sweetest fruit of all is already reached.

Let us, before I dismiss those of you who will be going away, pray this prayer together.

"Lord, revive us again. Lord, revive me. We would each one of us say 'Amen' to that petition. Lord, revive the pastor. Lord, revive the church officers. Lord, revive the workers. Lord, revive the members of the church. Lord, revive the backsliders. Lord, revive those who seem to live, but have grown careless. Lord, revive the church at large throughout the whole earth. Spirit of revival, come upon us now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen."

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit, be with us evermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 43:22-28; 44:1-8 AND PSALM 85

We will read two passages of Scripture this evening, both of which will have a bearing upon the subject we are afterwards to consider from our text. Let us first read a few verses from Isaiah's prophecy, beginning at chapter 43:22.

Isaiah Chapter 43. Verse 22. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

This was a sad charge for God to bring against His chosen people. They had grown weary of their God, and yet, truly, this charge may well be brought against some of us, for we have grown weary of God, we have forgotten Him in our daily walk and conversation, and have grown cold in our love towards Him.

23. *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

No, God's ways are not ways of irksomeness, but ways of pleasantness. Our religion is no tax upon us. We find Christ's yoke to be very easy and His burden to be very light. All wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense."

24. *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

“While your services have been neglected, your sins have been pampered.” What an accusation! As God says by the prophet Amos, “I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.” God seems to be oppressed with the sin of His people, but what comes next? Why, one of the very sweetest verses in the whole of the Scriptures.

25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

O glorious mercy! We are sunk in the depth of sin and yet God pardons us on the spot, and at once puts every sin away and bids us go in peace.

26-28. *Put me in remembrance: let us plead together, declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah Chapter 44. Verse 1. *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:*

After all these charges, you see, the love of God to His chosen people is still the same. Well might Paul say, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing, but even that shall not divide us from the love of God, for, “while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” So herein grace triumpheth over sin, and layeth our follies beneath its feet.

2-8. *Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing is on thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD’S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.*

Now turn to Psalm 85. This Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician. It is a Psalm worthy of the ablest musician. It is to be sung with care. They are well-instructed who can understand it and enter into the experience it describes. It is called—

A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

I have often reminded you, dear friends, that, when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, went down alive into the pit, the sons of Dathan and Abiram perished with their fathers, but we read, “Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not” We cannot tell why, we must set it down to the sovereign grace of God, and if it were so, then I can see why they henceforth became singers in the sanctuary.

“A Psalm for the sons of Korah.” You will sing best who wonder most at your salvation. You who can see no reason for it, except the sovereign goodness of God, will have sweet voices tuned with gratitude wherewith to praise God.

The first verse of the Psalm contains a happy memory—

Psalm Chapter 85. Verses 1-2. *LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.*

Let us think of what God has done for His people. He has been very favorable to us in years past. He has lifted up the light of His countenance upon His chosen ones, and made them glad. “Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.” We were in captivity once, exiles far off from God and home, but He has led our captivity captive, and we are now in bondage no longer, blessed be His name!

Note again what the psalmist says, “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.” What a joy that is! Forgiven sin is enough to make us sing to all eternity. If sin be pardoned, you have a mass of mercy in that fact too great for you to estimate its value. “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.”

See how the inspired writer puts it again, “Thou hast covered all their sin”—hidden it, put it out of sight with that divine covering of the atonement, which has hid forever, even from the eyes of God, the sin of His people. There is a happy memory for us—to see what God has done for us. Let us bless His name for it.

Now comes another happy memory—

3. *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.*

“Thou didst stay thy bow even after it was bent. Even when thy right arm was bared for war, thou didst make peace for us. ‘Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.’ When it burned like fire, yet didst thou stay it through the great atonement of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Now comes in a prayer—

4. *Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.*

“Thou hast done all this for thy people, now do this for us who fear lest we are not thy people—comfort us. Turn us, and then take thine anger from our conscience, and let us be at peace with thee.” How I wish that many in this Tabernacle would pray even now, “Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease!”

It is the prayer of a church that is under a cloud. It is the prayer of a nation that is suffering for its sin. It is the prayer of a sinner who sees what God has done for His people, and who entreats the Lord to do the same for him.

5. *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?*

“Surely we have not got into eternity yet. Lord, do not have eternal anger toward us. ‘Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?’ Wilt thou not hear our prayers? Wilt thou not have mercy upon us?”

5. *Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*

“Shall our children also suffer? Wilt thou not have pity upon them?”

6-7. *Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.*

“We are such poor blind creatures that we cannot see, yet, O Lord, show us thy mercy, make us see it, reveal it to us, and grant us thy salvation? It must be a free grant, a grant of grace, a grant of love, therefore, grant us thy salvation.”

Listen to this eighth verse.

8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak:*

“I will be silent. I have spoken to Him, now I will hear what His answer is. I will hold my ear attentive to listen to His voice.” O my dear hearers, when you are willing to hear God, there are good times coming to you!

8. *For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:*

There is peace, peace, nothing else but peace for them.

8. *But let them not turn again to folly.*

For if they do, the Lord will speak to them by rods and chastisements. They that get God's peace must mind that they keep it. They must walk carefully, or else they will break the peace, and they may themselves get broken in pieces. "Let them not turn again to folly."

9. *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him;*

When you honour Him, reverence Him, worship Him, his salvation cannot be far away from you.

9-10. *That glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together;*

At the cross is their meeting-place. There, you shall see God's mercy and God's truth embracing each other over the great sacrifice of Christ. Mercy and truth seem set at variance in the sinner's case till they are reconciled by the blood of Jesus.

10. *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

It seemed impossible that God should be righteous and yet be at peace with sinners, but Christ has taken both parties by the hand, and at Calvary they kiss each other. God is as righteous as if He were not gracious, and as gracious as if He were not just. Yea, His justice and His peace are each of them all the brighter because of the other.

11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

Carpeted with truth, and canopied with righteousness—what a wonderful scene is before us! Truth is coming out of the ground, as though it had been a dead thing, which begins to live, and leaves its tomb. And righteousness is throwing up the windows of heaven, and leaning out to look down upon the sons of men.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven." What a wonderful meeting this is of truth and righteousness—truth lifting up her hand to heaven and righteousness putting down its hand to earth!

12. *Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.*

It is all well when it is well with us in our relation to God. When we are reconciled to Him, then all things are reconciled by that fact.

13. *Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.*

Lord, hear the prayer of this Psalm, and answer it to us, for Jesu's sake!

Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—956, 957

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.